A Prequel Analysis of Sonic The Hedgehog, The Internal Struggle Of Self-Doubt & Finding Purpose In Life.

[Disclaimer: Contains Spoilers for Sonic IDW, Sonic Adventure, Sonic Unleashed, Sonic Lost World & Sonic Forces]

Sonic The Hedgehog.

For years the speedster has fought gods, monsters and much more. Having saved the Earth numerous times, he's forged bonds with many people and established rivalries with several villains.

He's a hero, no question in that.

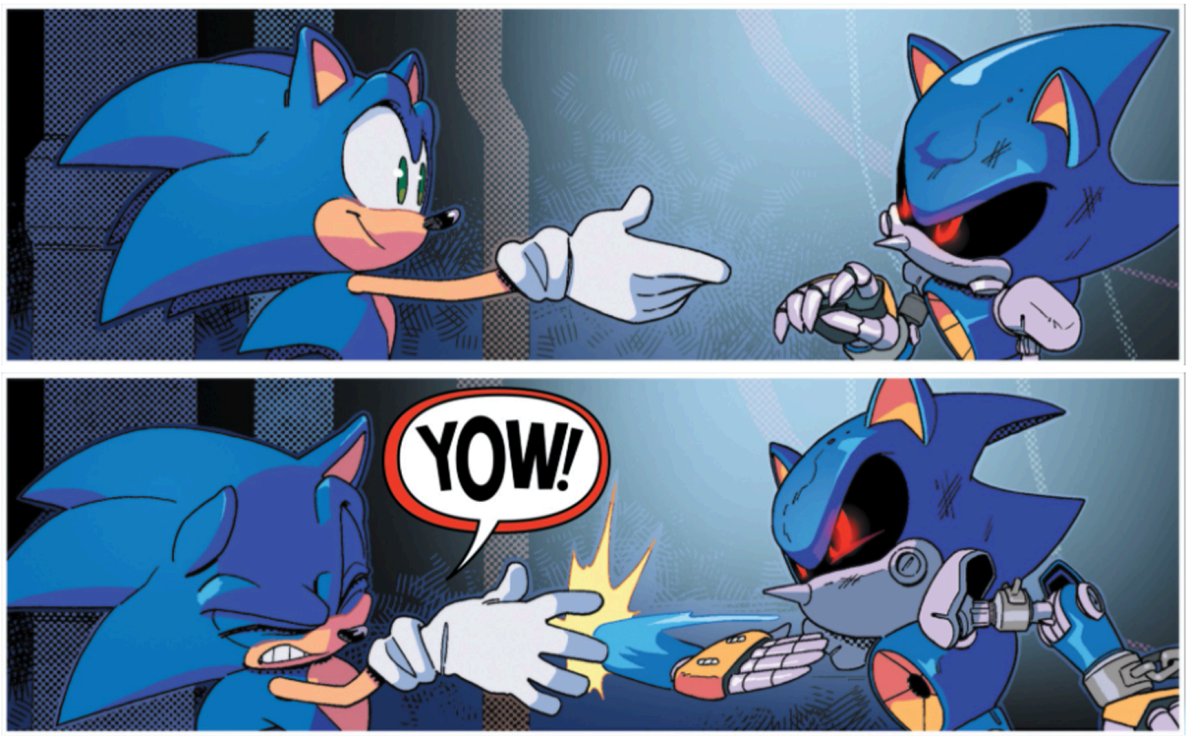
Despite this, the hedgehog has gone beyond mortals in fighting for what he sees as right, either for the preservation of the planet or the safety of the innocent. As a teenager, he's seen the "god of destruction" wipe out an entire city, the planet be broken apart, time and space be erased…twice, and much more. Regardless of his ever-lasting optimism and need to fight for what's right, Sonic has experienced so much destruction.

This constant chain of violence and repair is fueled by his main opposition, Dr. Ivo "Eggman" Robotnik. The mad scientist has forced Sonic into fighting against him as the doctor pursues total conquest of the Earth and all life on it. Sonic, of course, defeats Eggman and saves the day time and time again, and despite the stakes, our hero always comes out on top.

Through his many adventures, the lives saved, the evils defeated, the friends made, and the world explored, one has to wonder what Sonic thinks about his existence. It's an existential question, and one that many might not believe needs answering, however, as a mortal, even the most optimistic, free spirited soul on Earth would need to reflect on his life so far.

Because when you look under the hood, Sonic is actually more aware of the reality he lives in every day. Beneath all that carefree attitude rests a soul simmering with self-doubt.

Chapter 1: Forgiveness As A Weakness



Sonic is endlessly forgiving.

While he's usually depicted as throwing himself into a fight, even if that isn't the brightest idea, he understands when to enact diplomacy This usually works: Marlina, Shadow, E102 Gamma, Silver and more. He knows when to stop throwing punches and extend his hand out to those that could use it, but it's never guaranteed.

Upon the defeat of Metal Sonic in IDW Issue 11, he reactivates the damaged Metal and offers to call a truce under the false understanding that Dr. Eggman (who is named Tinker around that point in time) is gone, telling his robotic duplicate that he can live free, either being friends with him or just living separate from everyone.

"It's over, man. Eggman is done, and you don't owe him anything. You have a chance to live your life your own way now. Be your own person."

Sonic would have assumed that this might have been the chance to finally bring Metal out of the Eggman Empire and allow him to live free, yet quickly Metal rejects the gesture, slapping Sonic's hand and flying away. Sonic explains to Tails that it is his choice and they have to respect it. Unfortunately, this would result in Dr. Eggman regaining his memories, working with the new villain Dr. Starline, and ultimately bring one of the darkest catastrophes in the history of Earth.

The Metal Virus.

The Metal Virus was a destined inevitability the moment Sonic spared Dr. Eggman while he had amnesia, taking on the name of Mr. Tinker, allowing the doctor to reside in village secluded in the mountains, however, a fan of Eggman would locate and extract him, aiming to return the memories of the one wannabe conqueror: Dr. Starline.

With this dual intervention from Metal Sonic and Starline, Dr. Eggman's memories would return, allowing him to return to his quest of world domination. His latest plan saw the creation of a bioweapon, dubbed "The Metal Virus". The virus had the ability to robotsize any living organism, from flowers, trees, flickies to anthros. The outbreak would begin upon a surprise test on the villain duo Rough & Tumble, where upon being infected and fully roboticized, the duo would fight Sonic and Amy in what began as an investigation into the disappearance of Mr. Tinker at an old Eggman base.

Upon the altercation, Sonic would become infected with the virus, and would begin a balance of protecting others around him and putting the virus into remission.

While Sonic has dealt with personal mutations or deadly illnesses like the Warehog form or the Flame of Judgement, he’s able to keep an immensely brave face as it’s only him directly being suffered.

However, the Metal Virus goes far beyond a personal struggle for him to overcome, as not only are random civilians infected and turned into “Zombots”, but even his friends.

Charmy.
Cheese.
Chocola
Shadow.
Vanilla.
Vector.
Jewel.
Tangle.
Cream.

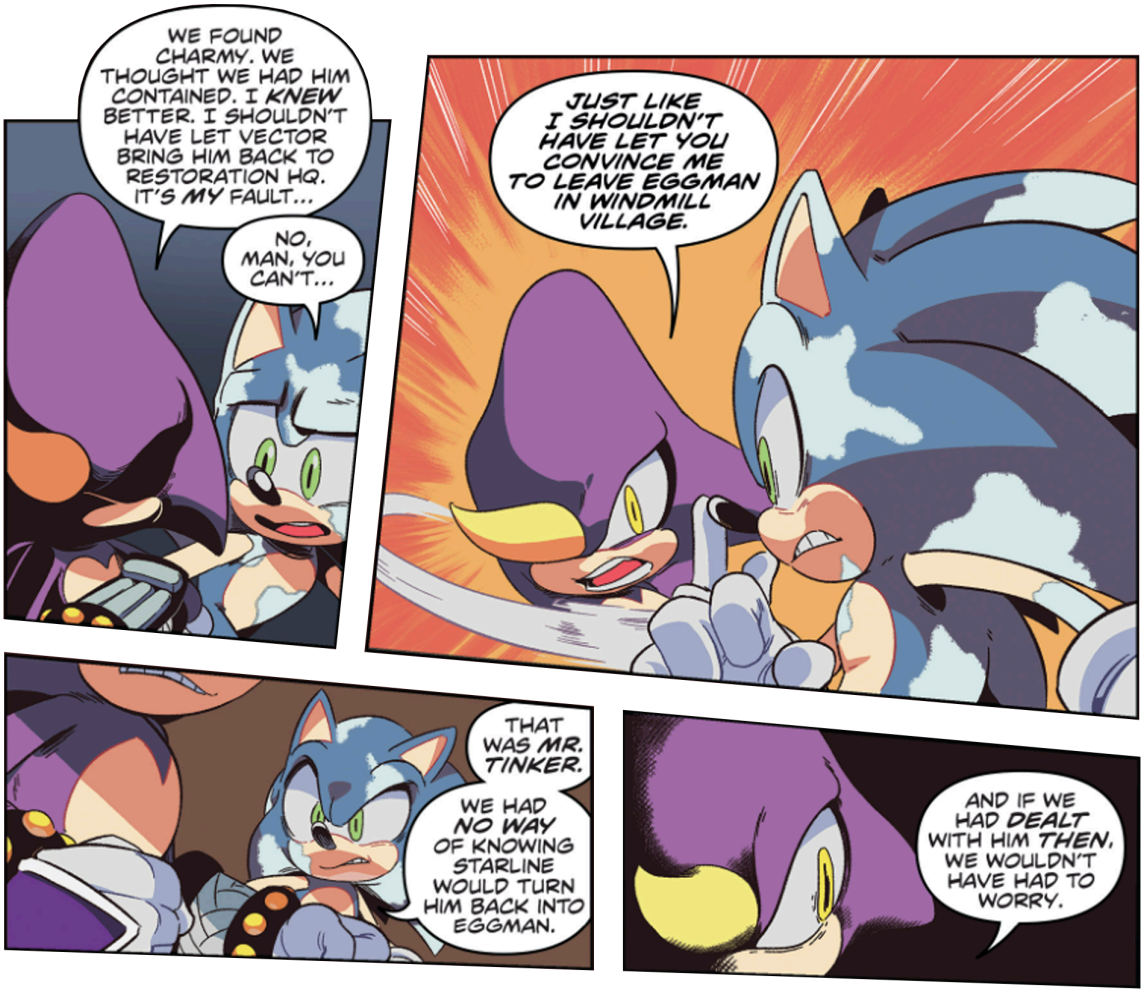
They were the victims of Sonic’s need to show mercy to everyone he meets, suffering for a self-imposed philosophy that, while has worked In the past, it wasn't a sure-fire answer to every conflict.

I DIDN'T PROTECT THE DATA-READER. I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO PROTECT MY FRIENDS.
I PUT MY FAITH IN THE IDEA EVERYONE HAS A LITTLE GOOD IN THEM, AND EGGMAN'S MADE ME PAY FOR IT EVERY DAY...

Sonic isn't blind to this. He understands that his actions will have consequences, and beneath all that calm and optimistic gesturing is someone who is very capable of feeling self-doubt and feeling like he's not meeting the standard set by himself.

He fights for justice, but what justice is worth the lives of your friends?

That's the thing: There isn't, and Sonic's friends lash out at him for this.


WE FOUND CHARMY. WE THOUGHT WE HAD HIM CONTAINED. I KNEW BETTER. I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET VECTOR BRING HIM BACK TO RESTORATION HQ. IT'S MY FAULT...
NO, MAN, YOU CAN'T...
JUST LIKE I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET YOU CONVINCE ME TO LEAVE EGGMAN IN WINDMILL VILLAGE.
THAT WAS MR. TINKER.
WE HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING STARLINE WOULD TURN HIM BACK INTO EGGMAN.
AND IF WE HAD DEALT WITH HIM THEN, WE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO WORRY.

The main reason for his friends finally breaking and lashing out at him is essentially because of one trait Sonic's being is made of: forgiveness.

He forgave Dr. Eggman and let his Mr. Tinker persona live out in Windmill Village, while Sonic also let Metal Sonic return to his evil ways out of a respect towards his free will, which while noble, has and will cost lives. Espio moving towards the view of a character like Shadow is a very revealing bit of character development as Espio's character is about calmness and being reserved, yet in very certain instances, like during the Neo Metal Sonic Incident (Sonic Heroes) or the Black Arms Invasion (Shadow The Hedgehog), he was willing to cross the line and begin making threats, with a strong sense of justice leading him to wipe out evil in anyway possible.

For a character like Espio, he's one of the character's outside Sonic's inner circle who could agree with him on the majority of things, not out of loyalty, but a shared moral code.

Yet despite that, Espio can actually show his disagreement. He lashed out at Sonic because he felt lied too, manipulated by a guy who is so wrapped up in needing to be pure, even if it's allowing evil to live another day.

With Cream? She's drained out.

Cream is one character who, despite everything, will hold out hope no matter what, always aiming to protect and preserve, just like Sonic.

But despite that, she's a child. She lost her mother, something that's never happened before.

While Cream does eventually comes back to the traits that provide hope to others, like Whisper when she convinces her not to shoot Eggman while he's helping them, this is a rare moment where the life, the joy, the fight to wish for better, is dangerously low, and that's not a light statement to make, and Sonic knows the implications of that.

When he greets Cream after meeting up with everyone, Cream just greets him with a quiet hello and walks away. It visibly affects him, it hurts, and the slight spiral effect in his eyes makes it look like he's holding in so much guilt, so much pain…and so much doubt in himself.

When you've failed the kindest little girl you know…is there any point in trying anymore?

I'VE BEEN HOLDING BACK, TRYING TO KEEP FROM TURNING TOO FAST.
BUT I'M NOT GOING TO LAST MUCH LONGER.
TANGLE... I'M SORRY...
FOR WHAT? IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
ISN'T IT? MAYBE IF I'D LISTENED TO SHADOW AND... OR IF I HADN'T LET METAL SONIC GO...
YOU DIDN'T BRING EGGMAN BACK. THAT WAS STARLINE. YOU MADE SURE METAL WAS HARMLESS. EGGMAN WEAPONIZED HIM AGAIN.
YEAH, AND I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO PROTECT MY FRIENDS. OR ANYONE ELSE.

Ironically, it's Tangle, one of the newest in Sonic's social circle that earnestly tries to comfort him, telling him that it isn't his fault, that the consequences of his one initial decision were external.

Yet Sonic, in a rare instance, actually tries to argue back, saying:

"Isn't it? Maybe if I'd listen to Shadow and…or if I hadn't let Metal Sonic go…"

This directly validates the observation that Sonic's need to forgive and forget is beginning to provide destructive results, and by directly tying back to those two moments, Sonic is very aware of what's REALLY happening.

You only recognise that if you've truly reflected on your actions. Internally, Sonic is doubting his entire self. Because that forgiveness is Sonic The Hedgehog.

Chapter 2: "Your Reckless Actions Endanger The World"

One of Sonic's most famous traits is his high-confidence, attitude and ego.

Some can see this as a positive, but most would see it as a major flaw of Sonic's soul. Throughout the series, Sonic's need to put his fists up or gloat has massively cost the world in immediate or long term ways. Ironically, this starts with an Echidna.

As Sonic and Tails recover two Chaos Emeralds and rest in the Mystic Ruins, Knuckles finds them and accuses Sonic of having a shard of the Master Emerald (which was broken and resulted in the awakening of Chaos). Sonic's initial response isn't to reason with Knuckles, dodge each attack the hot head throws at him or simply fallback, but to engage in a fight.

Upon knocking down each other, Sonic drops the Chaos Emeralds, to which Dr. Eggman makes a surprise entrance and steals them, feeding Chaos and transforming the water creature into Chaos 4, only needing three more emeralds to reach its "perfect" form.

Because Sonic couldn't just put his need to fight to the side, he actively accelerated the clock on Dr. Eggman's plans, rapidly increasing the chances of Station Square being completely destroyed. Knuckles is partly to blame too, but Sonic has shown the ability to talk people down, it's just that when he can get people like Knuckles or Shadow riled up, he'll enjoy it.

During the start of the Dark Gaia Incident, Sonic takes on an entire Eggman fleet in space on his own, eventually turning Super Sonic to pursue and defeat Eggman

However, when Sonic manages to catch up to Eggman and has him on his knees, Sonic spends precious seconds gloating to the doctor about his defeat instead of just capturing him and returning back to Earth.

Eggman actually plans ahead here and weaponises this trait and traps Sonic, extracting the Chaos Emeralds out of him and using the Chaos energy to activate a hidden weapon in his orbiting base, shooting a high-powered beam into the Earth and fragmenting each of its continents while exposing the planet's core. Alongside the immense destruction, Eggman's actual goal of unleashing Dark Gaia begins, with the deity creating its own monsters to rampage across the planet, and alongside that, mutate life on earth, both creature and environment.

The silent reality of this is heavy. Countless lives and infrastructure would have been wiped out, ecosystems bulldosed from not just being split in half but the initial impact of the blast causing a planet wide shockwave would have absolutely killed dozens and destroyed so much to even comprehend.

All this…because Sonic felt it was necessary to gloat to Eggman.

It puts the stakes into perspective. Regardless of what good Sonic achieves, it's always counter-balanced by his worst traits endangering not just his friends but all life, conscious and unconscious, at risk. In a way, every life on Earth is at the mercy of Sonic's ego and inherent need to forgive the worst people.

If he fights for what he sees as right, does it mean letting the stains of his personality take over? How many lives will it take for him to finally stop and think about what he's doing? Is anything he's doing really helping? What purpose does his life bring when all he's doing is essentially holding the entire planet hostage because of what he thinks is right?

This wouldn’t be the only time Sonic’s poor decision making would cost the planet.

During the Lost Hex Incident, Dr. Eggman discovered the last remaining Zeti, dubbed “The Deadly Six”, and enslaved them into helping the Doctor’s newest scheme. Eggman was aiming to construct a large device that would be able to drain the Earth of its lifeforce, where with only obtaining enough to not destroy the planet, would use the energy to produce a green liquid substance that could be made into a new power source for his machines. He’d end up developing an extractor, however due to it’s instability when under constant usage, destroying it would result in a “cataclysmic explosion that would ravage anything within a hundred miles.”

To keep the Deadly Six under command, the Doctor used an artifact called the “Cacophonic Conch”, an object that could produce a low-pitched sound that neutralised the powers and caused immense pain for the local Zeti species. During a lecture by Eggman about the Deadly Six’s failures to defeat Sonic so far, Sonic and Tails sneak up and eavesdrop on the conversation. Tails is cautious as he tries to identify the object Eggman is using, however, Sonic directly rushes in and kicks the Conch out of the Doctor’s hand, losing the only thing keeping the Zeti under control.

Due to this, the Zeti launched an offensive against Sonic and Eggman, taking over the Doctor’s badnik army and the extractor. Because The Deadly Six lived on a separate orbiting body from Earth, Zavok, the leader of the Deadly Six planned to weaponise the extractor and drain the Earth of its lifeforce, killing all life on the planet.

Alongside the major threat, tensions between Sonic, Tails and Eggman would grow as they worked together to try and shut down the extractor. As the party arrives at Eggman’s factory in the coldest area of the Lost Hex, Tails has an outburst while repairing Cubot’s voice chip.

Tails: [working on Cubot] Annnd... done!

Cubot: Thanks for fixing me.

Tails: No problem. Sorry you got stuck with a voice chip that looks like it was built by a two year old!

Dr. Eggman: I think I liked it better when I was trying to destroy you.

Tails: [Angrily] Yeah, well, feeling's mutual, Eggface!

[Sonic steps in front of Tails and Dr. Eggman to stop the fight]

Sonic: Whoa, whoa, WHOA! Before we start "destroying" each other, let's remember why we're working together.

Tails: [gritting his teeth] Okay, please remind me!

Sonic: Tails, we need Eggman to shut down his machine.

Tails: And you don't trust me to do it.

Sonic: What? No! I trust you Tails it's just that--

Tails: No you don't. You trust Eggman more. Do you know how much that bites?

Sonic: I do trust you, Tails. But the whole world's in danger because **I did something stupid. Do you know how much that bites?**

Through this scene, we see one of the first instances in the series where Sonic shows ownership of his mistakes. He calls his actions, something that is a key feature of his personality “stupid”, asking Tails the rhetorical question of knowing how much it hurts him.

He isn’t oblivious to the damage his ego and impatience can deal to the world around him, which makes the fact he keeps falling into this trap all the more worse. It’s one thing to not be aware of the damage you caused, it’s another when you can clearly see it.

Sonic, by calling his actions “stupid” directly confirms that he has self-doubt, especially when the writing is on the wall, and in his need to correct his mistakes, he can actually go overboard and make things worse for those around him.

By teaming up with Eggman, Tails feels offended as he wonders if Sonic even trusts him to deal with the extractor, and while Sonic tries to answer back, Tails shuts him down, asking him if he knows how much it hurts to feel useless to your friends. Here’s the key observation.

Sonic never answers that. We never get a definitive answer. This is a small example of avoidant behaviour.

In the Japanese version of the cutscene however, Sonic directly pins the stakes and situation on himself.

Sonic: We need Eggman’s help to stop the machine.

Tails: You don’t think I can stop it?

Sonic: Wha-?! No! I didn’t mean it that way…

Tails: Whatever! You trust Eggman more than me!

Sonic: No, I don’t. Right now, the planet is in trouble because of me. Please understand, Tails.

Sonic doesn’t beat around the bush, and he squarely puts blame on himself. He doesn't call himself stupid, he just says it as it is. The planet is in danger because of him. He even asks Tails to understand that.

Under both versions of the character, the trait is universal: Sonic blames himself.

Despite Sonic's awareness that his brashness was stupid, he soon after falls into the trap yet again. Within the Silent Forest, the party finds a stray animal capsule. Tails realises that the capsule is a trap, but before he can warn anyone, Sonic goes right into opening it, which Tails blocks his jump and is pushed inside, having Tails captured by The Deadly Six.

What's revealing is what Sonic says after Eggman shows respect for Tails' self-sacrifice:

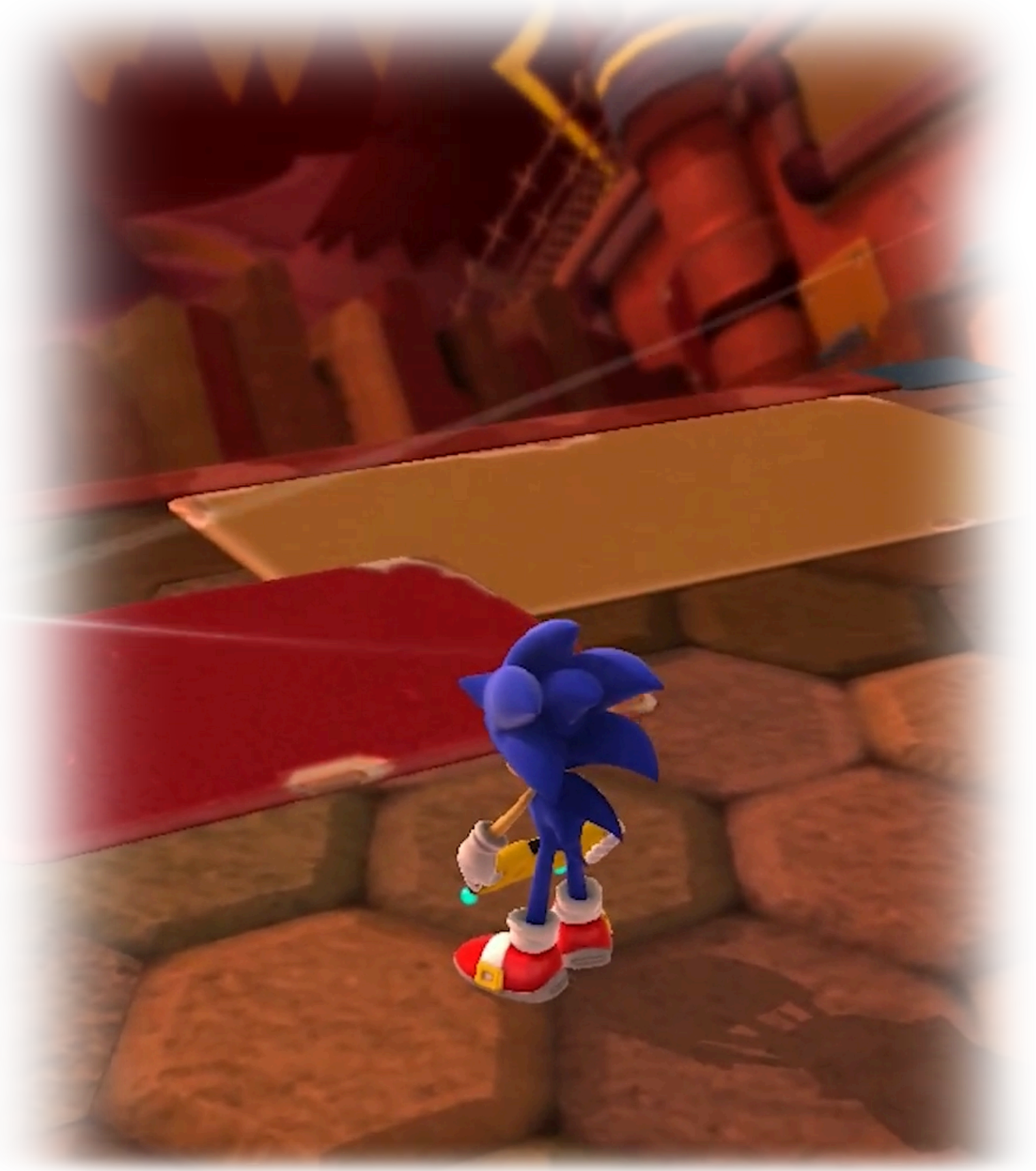
Sonic: I'm supposed to be the fastest, but I was too slow to save my buddy. (English)

Sonic: I could have saved him! I can't believe I'm the slowest at a time like this… (Japanese)

He realises that all his powers and skills aren't enough to clean up his mistakes. His self-made mistakes. His recklessness costs him Tails' safety.

And it only gets worse. Amy, Knuckles, and even Eggman (from Sonic's perspective) almost face their demise because of Sonic's actions.

No matter the side, Hero or Villain, Light or Dark, they'll be a victim of Sonic's philosophy, his being, his self.



This lack of patience kicks him down further. After the events on the Lost Hex, Dr. Eggman went on to find the lost Phantom Ruby from his early antics ages ago, alongside hiring Jackal Squad as mercenaries to help him with his new plan for world conquest.

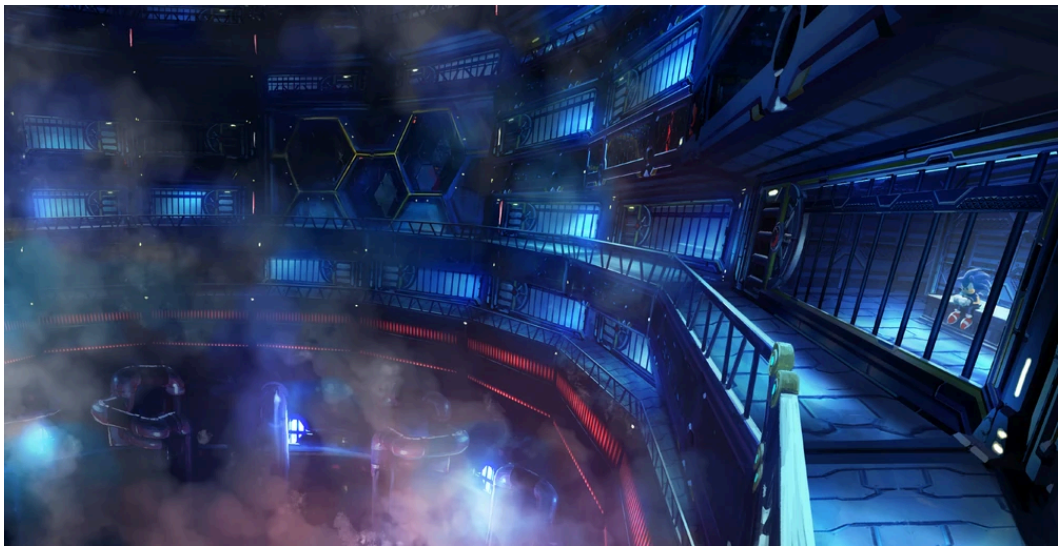
As an invasion on an urban center begins, Tails sends an emergency call for Sonic to provide assistance against Eggman's new army. After saving Tails and a number of civilians, Sonic engages with the doctor, however is stopped and left stunned as Shadow, Metal, Chaos and Zavok all appear, alongside a new figure who acts as the Empire's right-hand man, Infinite.

Sonic recklessly engages with the group of villains, however begins getting overwhelmed as each villain lands blow after blow, with Infinite kicking Sonic into the ground, leaving him unconscious and captured by the Eggman Empire. This defeat becomes the catalyst that begins a six month war across Earth, as the empire manages to wipe out all opposition and claims 99.99% control of the planet.

This would cause a chain-reaction of setbacks for Earth's safeguarding and development. Firstly, the planet's defensive force, The Guardian Units of Nations, also known as G.U.N, would be the main opposition to the Eggman Empire, having defended the planet from prior invasions from hostile forces like the Black Arms. Despite their best efforts, the Eggman Empire crushed G.U.N, diminishing the scale of their forces and making them barely an issue for the takeover of the planet.

Alongside this, many cities were destroyed and left to ash, with many citizens being driven out of their homes and either forced to fight or left to hide. This led to some dying in process, or joining a new rag-tag organization dubbed "The Resistance". From the supposed death of Sonic, morale across survivors and Sonic's friends fell, leaving members afraid or left traumatised.

While trying to help within the initial months of the war, Tails would leave the resistance and travel alone, left with the weighted guilt of seeing Sonic, the hero he saw as a brother, die right in front of him. That guilt would fester, causing Tails to become doubtful of himself, the heroics he's achieved in the past and have his insecurities fester to the surface.



Alongside the suffering on Earth, Eggman would reconstruct the Death Egg, using it as a multi-purpose orbiting station. One of its worst usages during the war was becoming a prison for thousands of civilians, left to give into despair and hopelessness The prisons would span the entire station, left to rot as their homes below were torn apart by Eggman's armies.

All this was a result of Sonic's reckless choice to engage with a threat without any thought or plan, and the price was half a year of death and destruction. While the planet wasn't torn apart like in the past, it was almost fully taken over by Eggman, the time when everything Sonic spent fighting for was taken away.

Because of Sonic, the Earth’s defensive forces were stomped out.

Because of Sonic, people’s homes, livelihoods and families were destroyed.

Because of Sonic, his best friend fell back into the dark he spent so long fighting out of.

When Sonic was found out to be alive, escaped imprisonment and helped the Resistance fight back against the Empire, he would encounter Infinite again within the Mystic Jungle, saving Silver from being killed. Infinite makes a remark though:

[English Script]

Infinite: But what’s that I smell? You reek of fear. Glad to see I left an impression.

Sonic: That’s not fear. I ran all the way over here.

[Japanese Script]

Infinite: I can smell the terror coming from you. Does this bring back the memories of my defeating you?

Sonic: Smell? You're just imagining things, aren't you?.

It’d be easy to assume that what Sonic is saying is the truth. He doesn't really fear Infinite, he just has a smell from running. However, it can reasonably be seen that Sonic is simply putting on a brave face, and that he does understand how much of a threat Infinite is.

Infinite is one of a few characters who have defeated Sonic in a fight or has been able to get into a tussle and come out in a draw. Regardless of how many encounters he has with Sonic, Infinite comes out of it composed and willing to know when to stop and refocus on the main mission.

Only a select few have managed to defeat Sonic. Mephiles, Silver, Dr. Eggman, Knuckles, the Time Eater, Dr. Starline and of course, Infinite. While two have become friends, two were either destroyed or wiped from existence entirely, and the other killed, Dr. Eggman and (due

to The Chaotix Casefiles, Infinite, are still alive. The pool of living members of Earth who've defeated Sonic and remain in their evil ways is very small, but Infinite is one of two who have fully survived and is always out there.

The idea that Infinite is one of the villains Sonic internally has fear off isn't that far-fetched. While Infinite is questionable if he truly believes in his convictions, if he really is as fearsome as he believes himself to be, if anyone was going to view the jackal in a light of fear, the only real candidate would be Sonic. Maybe a tussle on a random Friday isn't going to get to Sonic, but if the "Ultimate Mercenary" keeps returning with more and more elaborate plans, the bigger the tension between the two will undoubtedly become.

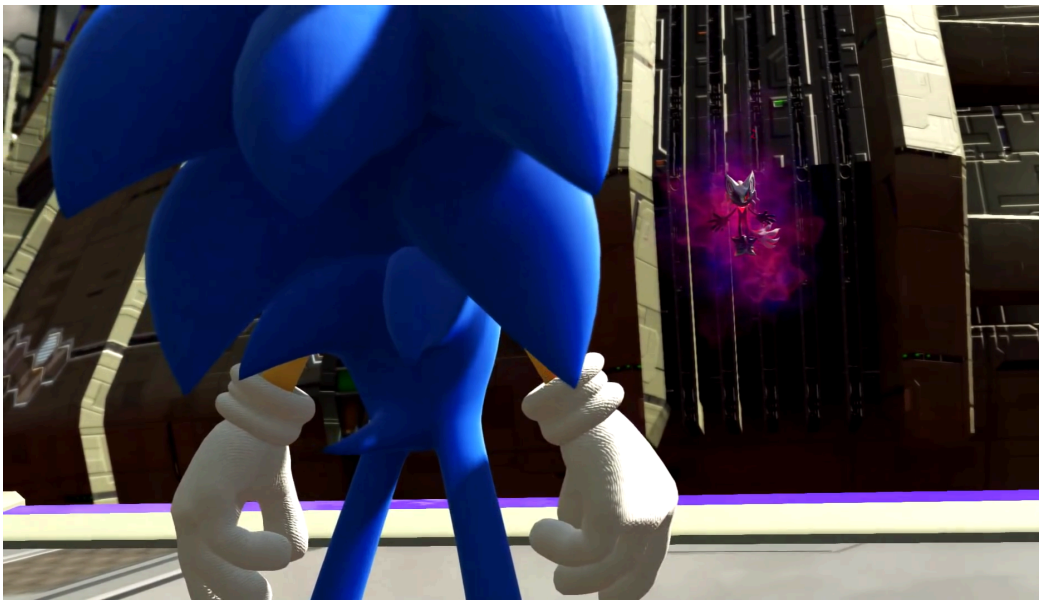
From the progression of Chaos' forms, the breaking of Earth, the near draining of Life and the near-conquest of the Eggman Empire, all began or worsened due to the same factor. Sonic was simply too reckless.

His regard to strategize, to play it safe, or simply deal with a threat swiftly left the fate of the Earth, the life it harboured and the lives of the innocent at his mercy. Due to Sonic's heroics, he's become a hero, yet it's provided the perfect grounds for him to be burdened with the role as saviour whenever a crisis arises. The grounds of which he must be seen as pure to walk on leaves him guilty when his mistakes lead to the ruin of humanity and life itself, making the argument of why he's even here, fighting after so long, become harder and harder to win.

Because the inciting choices that have led to calamity ultimately rely on his qualities that make Sonic-Sonic. When you bring such devastation along with every mistake you make, what purpose do you truly have?

What good is your life when all you do is make others suffer for your shortcomings?

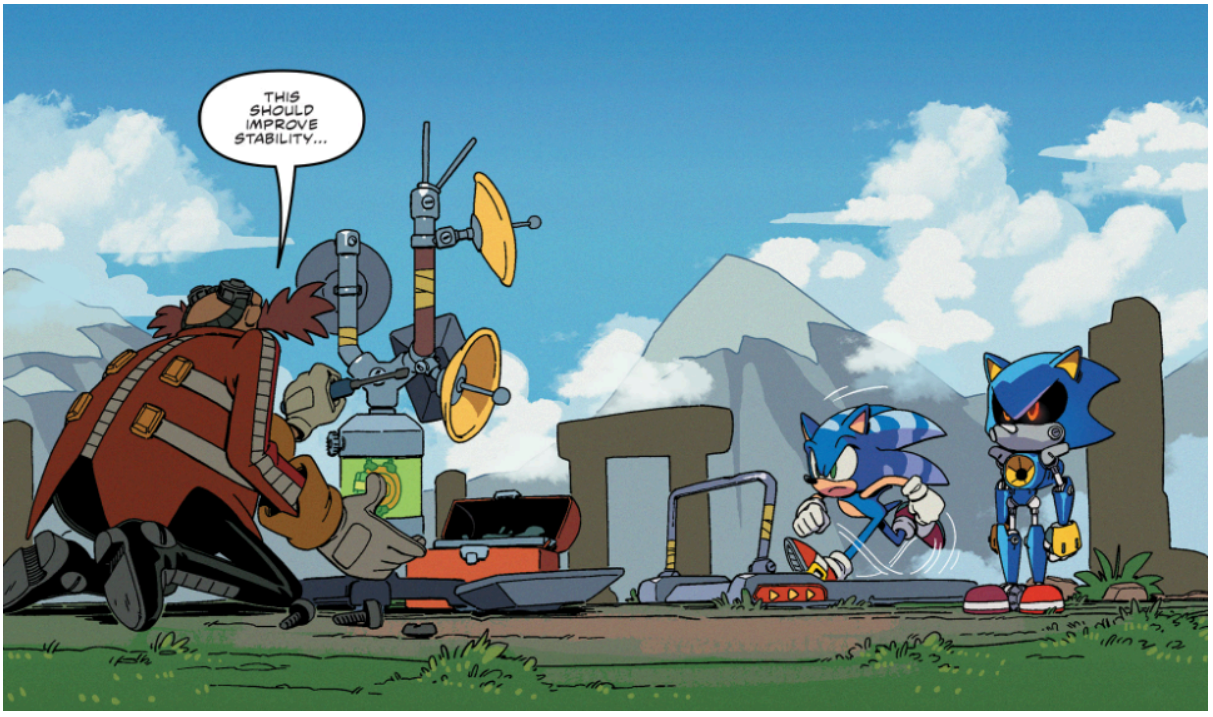
Eventually, the conversation fades from if you're a hero to something more existential: Is your life even worth living?



Chapter 3: The Germ of Doubt

Upon the floating paradise of Angel Island, the Restoration and remaining survivors of Earth rest, devising plans to take on the new leaders of the Zombot Army, and their control over the Metal Virus. Dr. Eggman and Dr. Starline lost ownership of their newest creation, and Starline, in a desperate move to recover control over the Zombots, would bring back living ghosts of Sonic's past failing's, The Deadly Six.

Upon their return and quick betrayal, The Deadly Six would weaponise the seven Chaos Emeralds to amplify their powers, boosting their control across large waves of Zombots and use it to help further spread the Metal Virus across the globe. The two doctors and Metal Sonic would escape, however teleport right to the front yard of the Master Emerald and in the middle of our heroes.



Dr. Eggman, understanding the stakes, knows when to work with the heroes to stop The Deadly Six, and despite his rejections, would steal the Warp Topaz, a gem-stone with reality-bending powers to suck the Metal Virus from Earth using the powers of Super Sonic and Super Silver. Dr. Eggman discards Starline. Everyone conceives of a plan to take on each member of the Deadly Six, steal the Emeralds and save the world. Tails and Eggman would use the Warp Topaz to create a multi-portal generator, and each member of the Restoration would prepare for the fight ahead. Sonic, with the ability to run off his infection into remission, is left to stand aside and run on a treadmill, letting him avoid infecting the lush fields of the Island. Metal Sonic is left posted next to Sonic, and he decides to speak to Metal when everyone is away…

Y'KNOW, IN A WAY, EGGMAN DIDN'T GET A CHANCE TO STAY REFORMED. STARLINE PUT HIM BACK ON THAT PATH.
BUT YOU...
...YOU JUST HAD TO GO BACK TO HIM, DIDN'T YOU?
YOU COULDN'T BE LIKE GEMERL OR OMEGA. YOU JUST HAD TO BE A ONE-NOTE JERK.

Sonic begins venting to Metal, almost talking down to his metallic copy, arguing that unlike Eggman, Metal did have a choice to be free, had the same opportunity both his “bloodline”, Omega and Gemerl, were given by Sonic and his friends, yet decided to go right back into the side of evil without even a second thought.

It’s a far cry from the Sonic that told Tails they should respect Metal’s freewill and choice, showing how much Sonic has been affected by the Metal Virus. Not physically through infection, but psychologically. Sonic has always fought for what he sees as right, the desire to be free and choose his own path, yet here with Metal, we can visibly see how bitter he is against Metal. Metal, in retrospect, becomes the figurehead of everything wrong with Sonic’s need to be forgiving and run free. Everything began-the return of Dr. Eggman, the creation of the Metal Virus, and the loss of Sonic’s friends-because he let go of the one being that can’t be reasoned with. A cold-hearted machine built for war, conquest and above all… total conviction to be seen as the real Sonic The Hedgehog.

Dr. Eggman overhears Sonic’s lecture, and pitches in.

OH-HO-HO! DID YOU REALLY THINK NEUTRALIZING METAL WOULD MAKE HIM LESS OF A THREAT?
WELL... YEAH. HE HAD NOTHING LEFT TO FIGHT FOR, AND NO WAY TO FIGHT.
YOU MAY HAVE NEUTRALIZED HIS HARDWARE, BUT HIS SOFTWARE DEMANDS BATTLE AND CONQUEST!
HIS SOLE DESIRE FROM THAT POINT ON WOULD BE TO BECOME DANGEROUS AGAIN!
WE DIDN'T THINK ANYONE COULD RESTORE HIM, THOUGH.
AND YOU WERE RIGHT!
BUT YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT STARLINE. YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT MY GLORIOUS RETURN.
AND LOOK WHERE THAT GOT YOU!
YEAH--YOU WERE LIVING HAPPILY AND PEACEFULLY AS MR. TINKER. YOU WERE BRINGING JOY TO OTHERS.
WHAT A WASTE, RIGHT?
WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO LET THAT GO?!
NOT UNTIL YOU GET A CLUE AND COME AROUND, DOC.

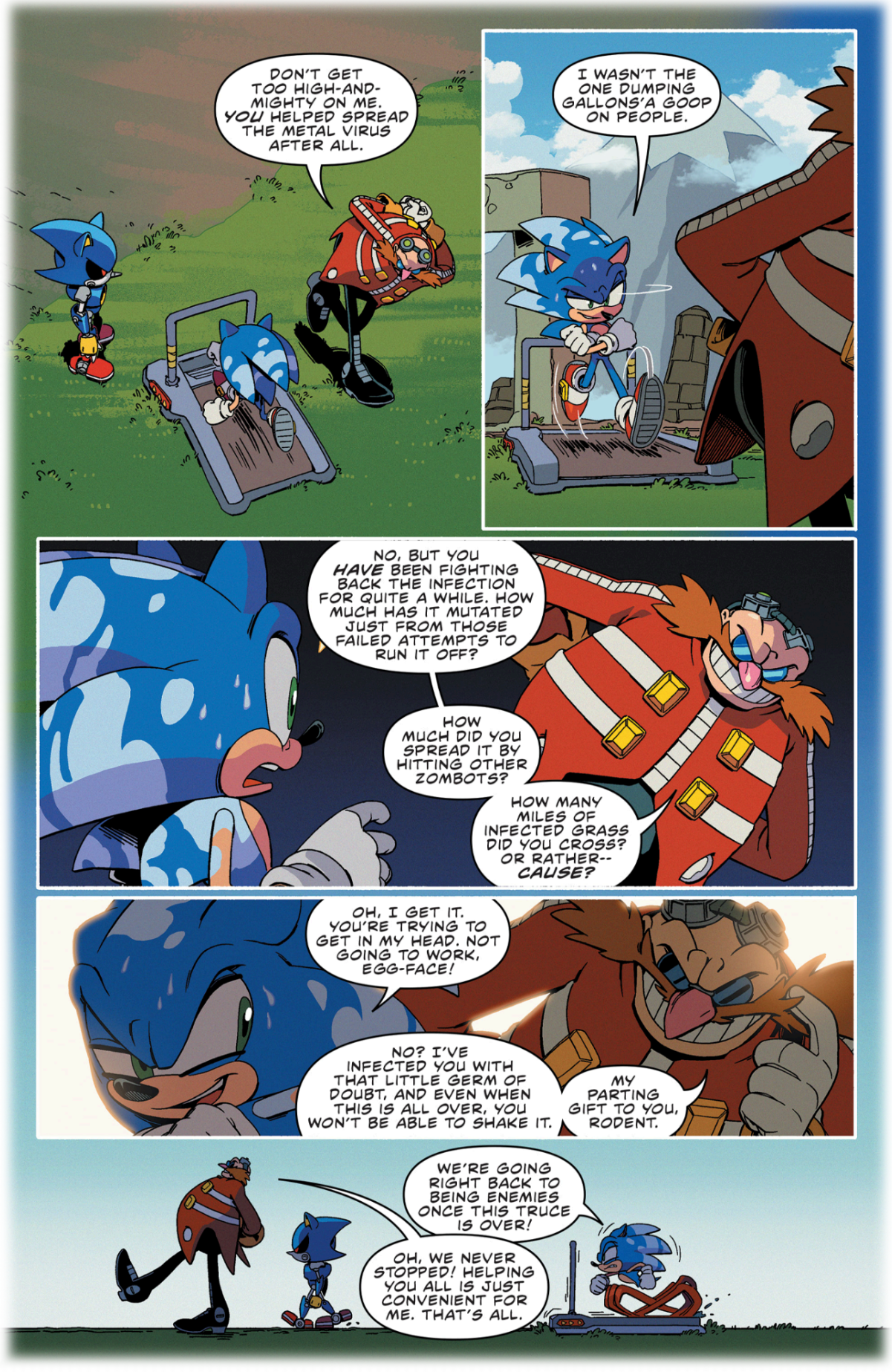
Dr. Eggman argues that the result of Metal deciding to return to evil was not a matter of if he had the free-will too or not, but an inevitability. Metal's conception on Little Planet was never about building an ultra-intelligent being but great enough of a personal drive for altercation

and domination. In a way, Metal is a great physical body of Eggman's own aspirations, faults and all. Eggman taunts Sonic, that regardless of any kindness you show Metal, he'll always pursue destruction over peace, finding the humor that Sonic never realised.

Sonic tries to defend himself, making it clear that the circumstances for which allowed Eggman to return were unexpected. Dr. Starline was a new face, somebody nobody knew either existed or would become a significant threat. Eggman rubs that fact in, and Sonic tries to rub it back into his face.

Sonic brings up what he got from letting Dr. Eggman live: Mr. Tinker, a man who wanted to live in peace, provide service to those who needed it, and valued the smiles he put on those he helped. He asks a rhetorical question, that it was a waste. Eggman gets annoyed, wondering when Sonic will let "Mr. Tinker" go, and Sonic reaffirms his values, making it clear that he'll always be holding out hope until Eggman finally reforms. Yet the Doctor begins what becomes one of the most psychologically damaging moves he could make.

He plays into Sonic's internal fears.


DON'T GET TOO HIGH-AND-MIGHTY ON ME. YOU HELPED SPREAD THE METAL VIRUS AFTER ALL.
I WASN'T THE ONE DUMPING GALLONS'A GOOP ON PEOPLE.
NO, BUT YOU HAVE BEEN FIGHTING BACK THE INFECTION FOR QUITE A WHILE. HOW MUCH HAS IT MUTATED JUST FROM THOSE FAILED ATTEMPTS TO RUN IT OFF?
HOW MUCH DID YOU SPREAD IT BY HITTING OTHER ZOMBOTS?
HOW MANY MILES OF INFECTED GRASS DID YOU CROSS? OR RATHER-- CAUSE?
OH, I GET IT. YOU'RE TRYING TO GET IN MY HEAD. NOT GOING TO WORK, EGG-FACE!
NO? I'VE INFECTED YOU WITH THAT LITTLE GERM OF DOUBT, AND EVEN WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SHAKE IT.
MY PARTING GIFT TO YOU, RODENT.
WE'RE GOING RIGHT BACK TO BEING ENEMIES ONCE THIS TRUCE IS OVER!
OH, WE NEVER STOPPED! HELPING YOU ALL IS JUST CONVENIENT FOR ME. THAT'S ALL.

Dr. Eggman begins by stating that due to his infection and need to put it into remission through running, Sonic has been spreading the Metal Virus.

Dr. Eggman: “Don’t get too high-and-mighty on me. YOU helped spread the metal virus after all.”

Sonic clearly doesn't understand what the Doctor means, being cocky, folding his arms together, running backwards on the treadmill and smirking, stating:

Sonic: “I wasn’t the one dumping gallons’a goop on people.”

His lack of understanding on his role with how the infection highlights Sonic’s recklessness, and Eggman knows that weakness, and with him smirking and thinking he’s got the moral high-ground over the Doctor, Eggman finally reveals the curtain, asking three key questions:

Dr. Eggman: “No. But you HAVE been fighting back the infection for quite a while. How much has it mutated just from those failed attempts to run it off? How much did you spread it by hitting other Zombots? How many miles of infected grass did you cross? Or rather–CAUSE?”

The questions put the entire situation into view. Sonic, patient zero of the Metal Virus, has been running across the globe, trying to save lives, save his friends, stop Eggman, to send his infection into remission, but due to the Virus’ ability to mutate at rapid speed, has begun enduring Sonic’s counter-treatment and has he’s been losing his ability to drastically shave off the takeover of the infection, leading to a slower, but durable rate of conversion. This new, and much deadlier strain of the Virus is transmissible to others, including other Zombots. Every punch or spin-attack to an infected Zombot doubles as spreading the new strain, thus spreading to the uninfected, leading to this strain becoming the dominant of the mutated Virus variations.

The third question is meant to hit harder. Sonic has always fought to preserve the Earth, protect against industrialization that needed to harm the vegetation around the area, yet due to Sonic’s infection and need to keep running to beat back the Virus, has crossed miles upon miles of grass, which in-turn, has left it infected and spread across the Earth. The hero that aimed to defend nature, would become the high-speed spreader that would kill it off.

Despite only focusing on the Metal Virus, Dr. Eggman could have gone deeper, questioning Sonic’s previous mistakes and overlooks.

How much destruction befell Station Square because you helped further accelerate Chaos’ mutations?

How many fell off the broken continents of Earth when you decided to gloat while dropping your guard, giving me easy access to the Chaos Emeralds?

How much vegetation died off when you freed the Zeti and let them drain the planet of its lifeforce?

How much did you set back Earth’s defences when being defeated by Infinite and let us make you rot for half a year?

Sonic turns away, trying to avoid answering Eggman's question about the idea that he was a super-spreader for the Metal Virus, but Eggman makes it clear what he's trying to do, and becomes the smoking gun for everything…

Dr. Eggman: No? I've infected you with that **little germ of doubt,** and even when this is all over, you won't be able to shake it. My parting gift to you, rodent.

Doubt: a feeling of not being certain about something, especially about how good or true it is.

Sonic has risked so many lives, the fate of the innocent, the future of the Earth, and all he can do is keep running.

His friends, once people who had normal lives, now made to either suffer or endure for his values, what HE believes is right. Due to Sonic's ideology, they have become warriors of his own design. Fighting his battles in his name.

There's a great quote from the show Doctor Who, from the episode "Journey's End". Davors, the creator of the Daleks, is close to victory, and with the Doctor trapped and reminded of not just those he sees as friends be turned into soldiers in his name, but those who gave their life for him over his adventures…Davros utters these words:

Davros: "The Doctor. **The man who keeps running. Never looking back, because he dare not…out of shame.**"

Through his many adventures, he's made so many friends, but inadvertently dragged them into the center of a never ending war, a war Sonic truly has no desire to end. He never kills Eggman, never captures him, but instead lets him go-everytime. He endlessly hopes and wishes that the Doctor will reform, but time and time again, they keep fighting, and the ones who are left to pick up the pieces and rebuild are the people who just want to live in peace.

Despite his unwillingness to end the conflict, Sonic does have empathy for those caught in the crossfire, he never wants to see so many die and suffer for his mistakes or actions, but his way of life, his meaning in life…is ultimately a hindrance. The need to get into a fight over minor issues, the desire to give those who wish not to be reformed the chance to constantly backfiring.

During the events of the Zeti Hunt Arc, Sonic and the Restoration track down and defeat the Deadly Six. Sonic plans to have them be launched back onto the Lost Hex, a show of mercy. Zavok reacts to this, laughing at Sonic and stating:

Zavok: "I will make you regret showing restraint. This moment of compassion will be repaid tenfold in violence and misery."

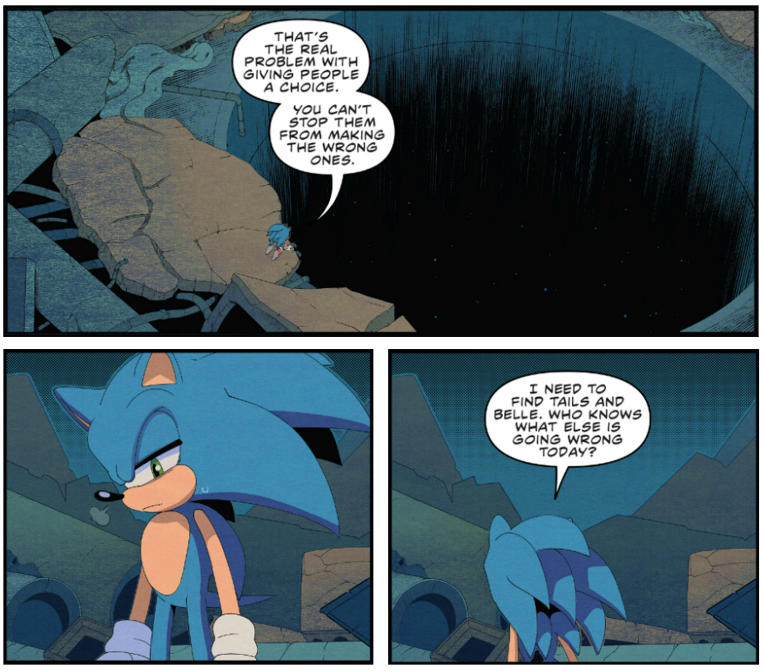
On the comic panel, flashes of Shadow arguing with Sonic about not doing anything with Eggman while he was still Mr. Tinker, Espio shouting out of frustration in not stopping Eggman in Windmill Village when he had the chance, Metal Sonic's reappearance and repaired state during their first encounter after Metal's prior defeat and Eggman arguing about returning to his evil ways during his argument with Sonic during the Metal Virus arc.

AFTER ALL WE'VE DONE... YOU'RE SHOWING US MERCY?
EH, WE'VE ALREADY WON. THAT'S ENOUGH.
Y'KNOW, ASIDE FROM IT BEING REALLY HUMBLING FOR YOU GUYS.
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
I WILL MAKE YOU REGRET SHOWING RESTRAINT.
THIS MOMENT OF COMPASSION WILL BE REPAID TENFOLD IN VIOLENCE AND MISERY.
THIS IS YOUR FAULT. IF I HAD DESTROYED EGGMAN IN WINDMILL VILLAGE, NONE OF THIS WOULD BE HAPPENING.
JUST LIKE I SHOULDN'T HAVE LET YOU CONVINCE ME TO LEAVE EGGMAN IN WINDMILL VILLAGE.
OH. HEY, METAL. LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE FULLY REPAIRED, HUH?
AHHH... THAT LIFE WAS RELAXING. BUT I'M DOING SOMETHING BETTER.

Zavok's line would become immortalized in the creation of Surge The Tenrec, a traumatized victim experimented by Dr. Starline who became dedicated to killing Sonic due to his choice in never taking Dr. Eggman (or anyone) out for good. That desire for destruction came from Sonic's history of choosing to let his enemies escape.

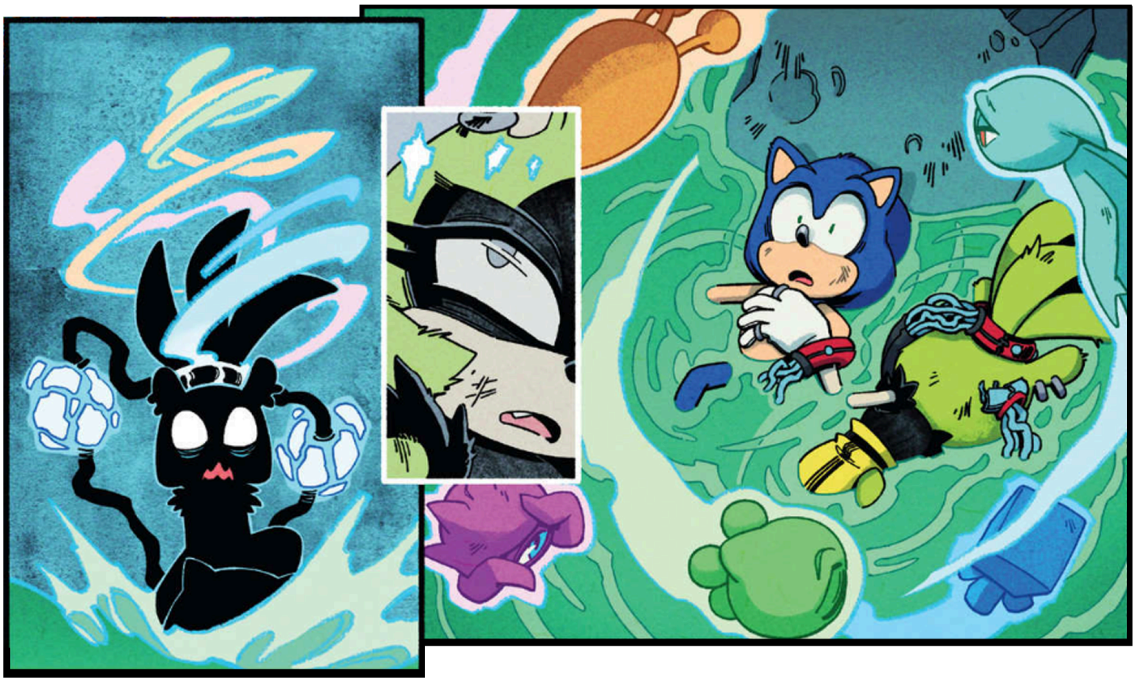
I AM YOUR FAULT. STARLINE? EGGMAN?
SURE, THEY'RE PART OF THIS AND THEY'LL GET THEIRS, BUT IT REALLY COMES DOWN TO YOU.
IF YOU HAD JUST TAKEN THEM OUT, I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN MADE!
OR IF THAT GOES AGAINST YOUR PRECIOUS "MORAL CODE," YOU COULD'VE JUST ROLLED OVER AND QUIT!

Upon their first fight in the ruins of Dr. Starline's base, she makes this clear to the hedgehog, and upon her defeat and rejection of Sonic's help, she falls into the abyss, with Sonic reflecting on his ideology.

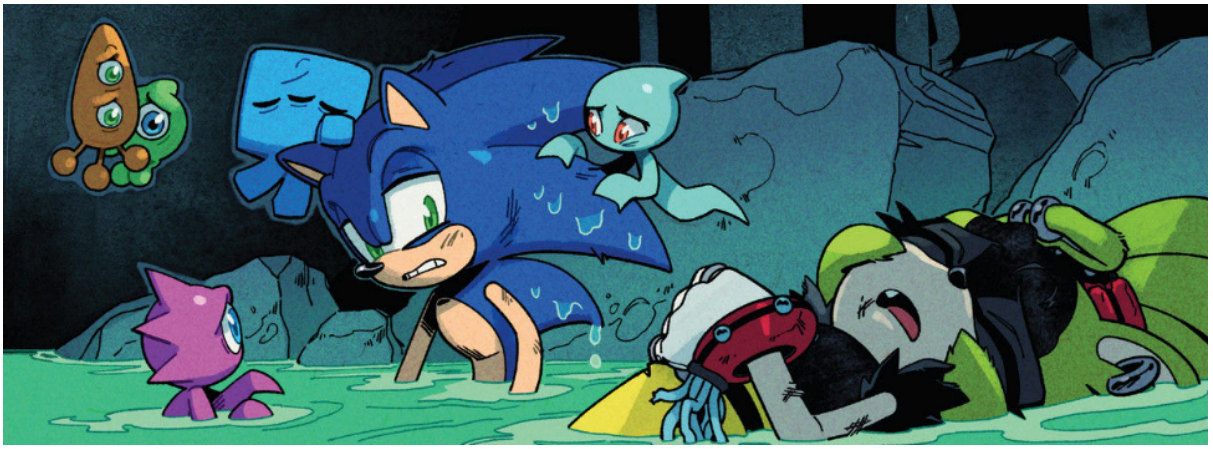

THAT'S THE REAL PROBLEM WITH GIVING PEOPLE A CHOICE.
YOU CAN'T STOP THEM FROM MAKING THE WRONG ONES.
I NEED TO FIND TAILS AND BELLE. WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE IS GOING WRONG TODAY?

Shortly after the events of their first fight, Surge returns with a new invention, the dynamo cage, a contraption that can weaponize Wisps in a wearable form. Surge uses it to get revenge on Sonic and Eggman, attacking them over the next few issues. Eventually, the back-and-fouth ends where it began for Surge, Dr. Starline's base. Her and Kit's birthplace. Upon encountering Eggman and Metal, Sonic and Tails decide to form a truce between themselves and Eggman. After finding Surge and Kit, Sonic and Metal take on Surge as Tails tries to talk Kit down.

Surge manages to stun Metal and goes right for Sonic, however Sonic dodges her attack yet causes every glass tank of liquid to explode, flooding the area. Sonic tries to avoid the liquid by wall running, however after having a Wisp platform disappear under him, falls right into the liquid before Tails can catch him.



Surge uses the opportunity to electrocute Sonic to death, and she gets incredibly close, however the Dynamo Cage's containers shatter, causing Surge to lose consciousness.



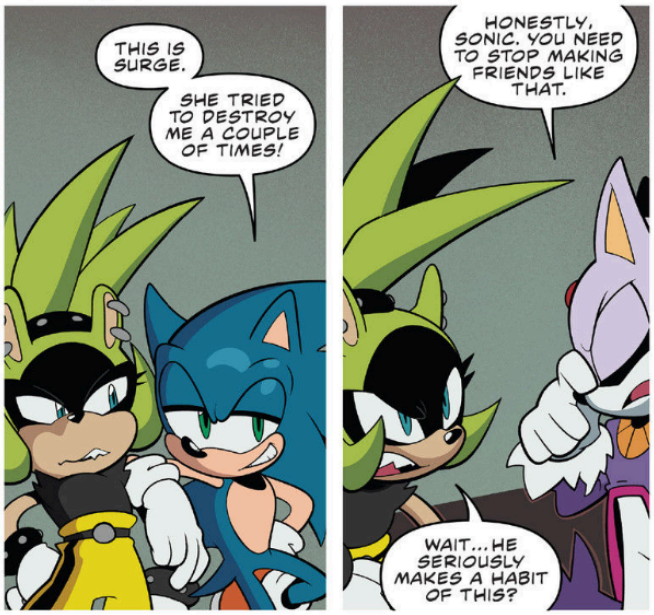
This ends their conflict. For now.

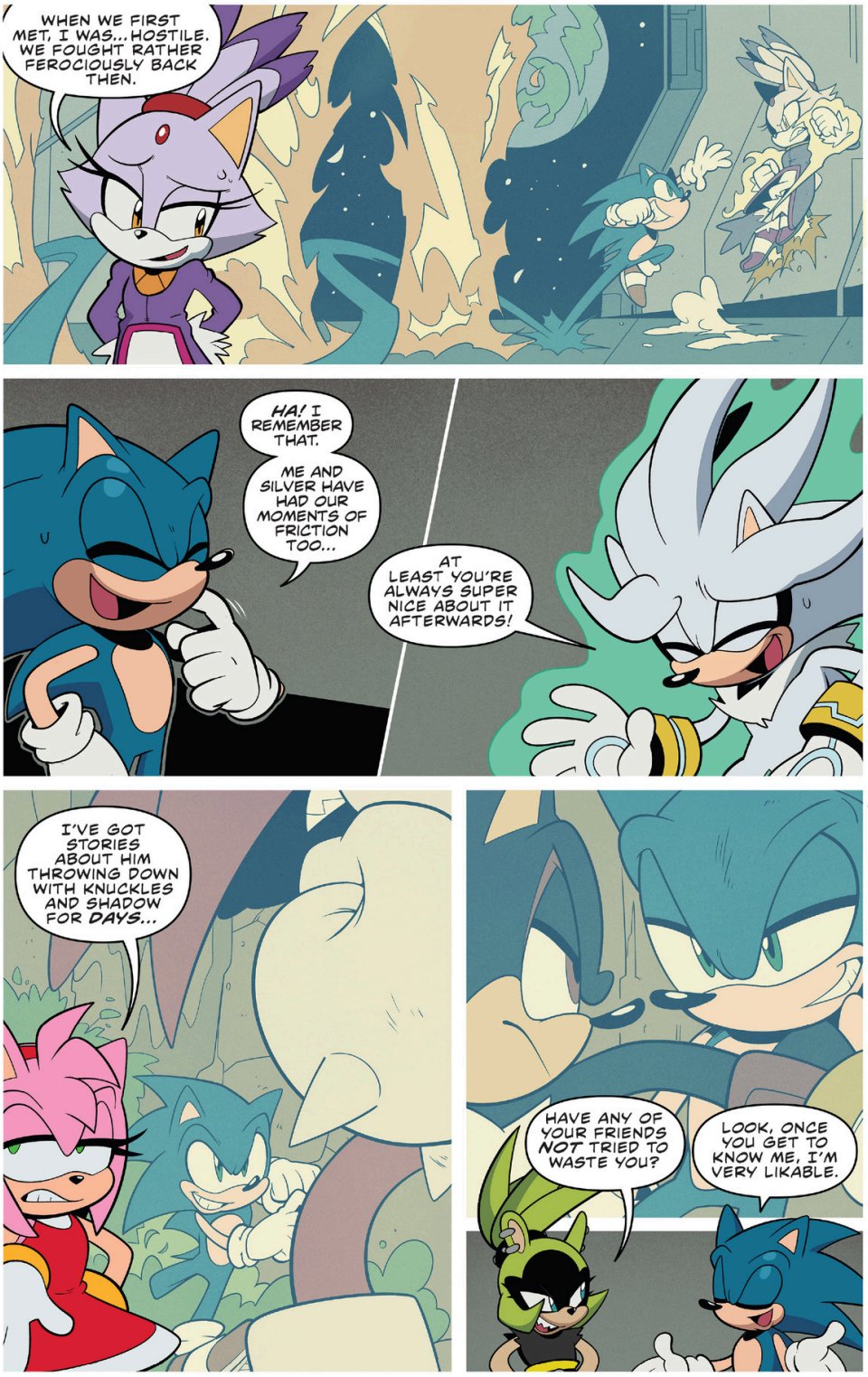
Kit recovers Surge's body and retreats. The next time they meet, Surge and Kit are chilling with Amy at Restoration HQ, which shocks Sonic. The duo reveal that they're changing their ways, since Sonic offered them that chance. Obviously, it's aiming to be a doublecrossing, but what Surge is doing is weaponising Sonic's forgiveness against him like many have done before.

This leads to Sonic and Amy giving a tour of Restoration HQ for Surge and Kit, where the party encounters a few of Sonic's friends. Silver and Blaze run into the group, and after Sonic introduces Surge to Blaze, this exchange takes place. Blaze, holding her brow, says:

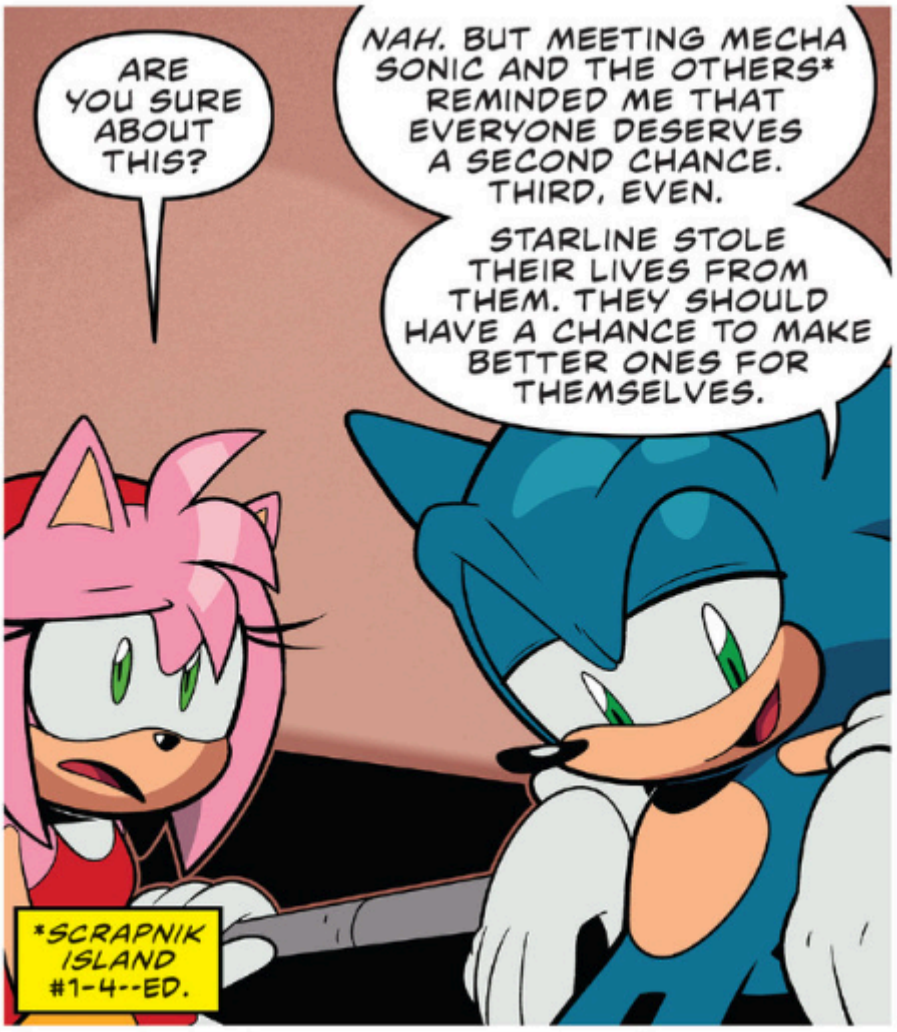
Blaze: Honestly, Sonic. You need to stop making friends like that.

This leaves Surge confused, wondering if Sonic has a habit of making friends from former enemies.


THIS IS SURGE.
SHE TRIED TO DESTROY ME A COUPLE OF TIMES!
HONESTLY, SONIC. YOU NEED TO STOP MAKING FRIENDS LIKE THAT.
WAIT... HE SERIOUSLY MAKES A HABIT OF THIS?


WHEN WE FIRST MET, I WAS... HOSTILE. WE FOUGHT RATHER FEROCIOUSLY BACK THEN.
HA! I REMEMBER THAT.
ME AND SILVER HAVE HAD OUR MOMENTS OF FRICTION TOO...
AT LEAST YOU'RE ALWAYS SUPER NICE ABOUT IT AFTERWARDS!
I'VE GOT STORIES ABOUT HIM THROWING DOWN WITH KNUCKLES AND SHADOW FOR DAYS...
HAVE ANY OF YOUR FRIENDS NOT TRIED TO WASTE YOU?
LOOK, ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW ME, I'M VERY LIKABLE.

This leads to a page that sets the stage well for what is coming in the horizon. Blaze, Silver and Amy explain the times Sonic has fought and befriended his ex-enemies, with Amy bringing up Knuckles and Shadow. It helps inform Surge that she can reform and befriend Sonic if she truly wanted to, but since this is the final Issue of Sonic IDW before…well…we'll get to that, it works as the perfect reminder for Sonic's forgiveness? It isn't all bad.


ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
NAH. BUT MEETING MECHA SONIC AND THE OTHERS* REMINDED ME THAT EVERYONE DESERVES A SECOND CHANCE. THIRD, EVEN.
STARLINE STOLE THEIR LIVES FROM THEM. THEY SHOULD HAVE A CHANCE TO MAKE BETTER ONES FOR THEMSELVES.
*SCRAPNIK ISLAND #1-4--ED.

As the tour ends, Surge and Kit head off the scheme, and this exchange happens between Sonic & Amy:

Amy: Are you sure about this?

Sonic: Nah. But meeting Mecha Sonic and the others *(Scrapnik Island #1 - #4)* reminded me that everyone deserves a second chance. Third, even. Starline stole their lives from them. They should have a chance to make better ones for themselves.

Despite what's happened, Sonic's ability to forgive is strong and unmoving. He does doubt if he's doing the right thing, but he wants to always hold out hope that those who go against him can reform. The issue lies in timing. Unlike Mecha Sonic who had a long time to sit on his feelings and process them, Surge and Kit haven't had that time, they're in a spot where anything is possible.

If he can achieve that, form a bond and friendship with someone who's firmly on the side of evil, yet still change them…that might be enough. It might kill the doubt…the shame…the tragedies of the past. He needs validation that his entire life isn't being wasted…

Final Chapter: The Next Frontier

The Blue Blur. Knight of the Wind. The Iblis Trigger. Speed Demon. Always fighting for what he sees as just, he's been the saviour of Earth and its people numerous times, risking his life to protect the world. But for as many times he's saved the world, he's also been the catalyst behind its most disastrous events. Due to his reckless actions and moral code, his forgiveness leads to the release of villains back into the world and his brash decisions cost the planet dearly. They are conscious decisions or integral traits of his being. Facts he's aware of, however, showing no desire to fix the root cause of it: himself.

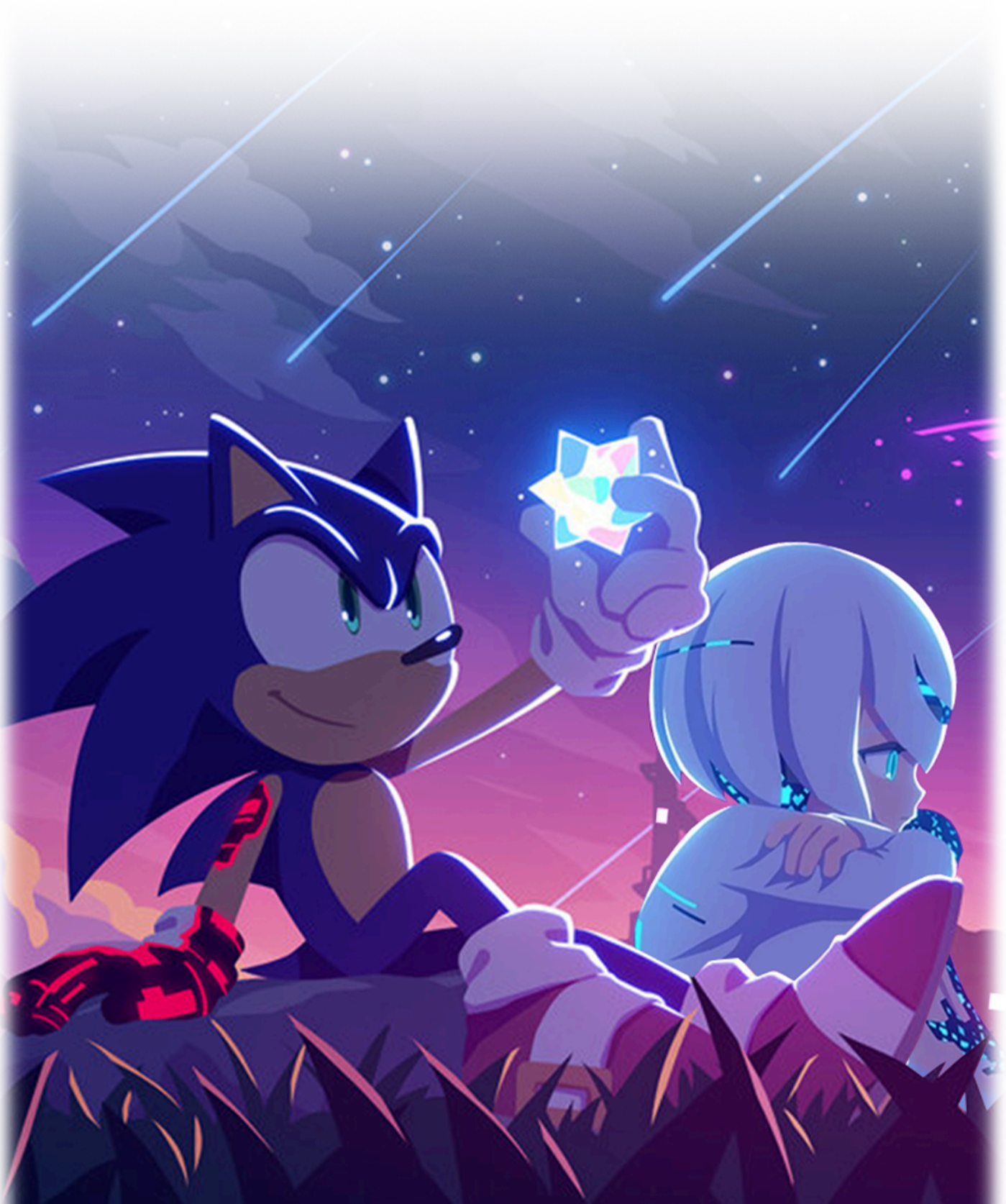
He's a man of conviction. Always choosing to risk everything for a life, one he believes can be reformed. It's a way of life that opens the door to so much suffering and chaos. For nature. For humanity. For his friends. Sometimes even for reality itself. But he has one thing: hope. He keeps running, never stopping out of shame but also a desire to experience a new day. Ready to take on anything destiny brings his way, always with a smile. But deep down, he's doubting it. The forgiveness, his reckless actions, everything that makes Sonic-Sonic.

After everything, the destruction he's brought to pass, the friends he's made to suffer because of his ideals, one would wonder if Sonic himself thinks if it's all worth it. Does fighting for what's right lead to such consequences for everyone else? Is everything he's done with his life worth it?

All those chances given. All the people lost. All the pain endured. Is it worth it? Sonic is filled with doubt that his life has much meaning, if he's wasted it. If there's any point in living the life he's been granted.

Sonic needs validation that everything he's chosen to do is worth it.

He'll find it.

With Her.

To Be Continued…
Sonic & Sage: A Dynamic Like No Other